STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

NATIONAL SECURITY STRATEGY: A BOTTOM-UP REVIEW

BY

LIEUTENANT COLONEL COLIN K. DUNN
United States Army

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Lieutenant Colonel Colin K. Dunn
United States Army

Colonel Sanford D. Mangold
United States Air Force
Project Advisor

US ARMY WAR COLLEGE
CARLISLE BARRACKS, PENNSYLVANIA 17013

ABSTRACT

AUTHOR: Colin K. Dunn, LTC, USA

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How much of a soldier's experience finds its roots in our National Security Strategy? The answer to this question is important; leaders should know the effect their policies will have on the soldiers they are charged to lead. If a leader affects the character of the army through a strategy, he may well affect the potential effectiveness of that force. Further, knowing the effect of his strategy on soldiers might offer the strategist some additional considerations when formulating a strategy. This paper discusses our strategies in the mid-seventies, eighties and nineties in terms of their ends, ways, and means, focusing on the strategies' effects at the soldier level, a review from the bottom-up. The paper offers illustrations of the effect strategy has on soldiers and offers some corresponding principles for leaders to consider in formulating strategy.

Introduction

Our National Security Strategy defines the way the US deals with a dangerous world. Over the past twenty years our strategy has met with varied success in dealing with our adversaries and preparing for the future. As a soldier during that period, a member of one instrument of our strategy, I have wondered what consideration our nation's strategists allow soldiers in the formation of strategy. From my beginnings in the mid-seventies, when the Army in Europe was in turmoil, through the Reagan build-up of the eighties, to the peacekeeping challenges of today, I have served with soldiers who have struggled to do their part of the nation's bidding. Now, after 22 years, I find myself wanting to revisit those periods and examine our nation's strategy, a sort of bottom-up review. How much of a soldier's experience finds its roots at the national level?

The answer to this question is important; leaders should know the effect their policies will have on the soldiers they are charged to lead. If a leader affects the character of the army through a strategy, he may well affect the potential effectiveness of that force. Further, knowing the effect of his strategy on soldiers might offer the strategist some additional considerations when formulating a strategy. Thus, the effect of policy on the army's soldiers is worthy of investigation.

Admittedly, a soldier's perspective of the National Security Strategy is limited and shaped by his environment. But only by

way of a soldier's testimony could one discern the effect strategy has on a soldier. In this case, my perspectives were those of a brand new second lieutenant in Europe, a major stateside, and battalion commander back in Europe again. In accordance with those assignments, this paper will discuss our strategies in the mid-seventies, eighties and nineties in terms of their ends, ways, and means, focusing on the strategies' effects at the soldier level, a review from the bottom-up. The purpose of this paper is to illustrate the effect strategy has on soldiers and to offer some guiding principles for leaders to consider in formulating strategy.

National Security Strategy, 1975

The years 1973-1976 were marked by a consistent National Security Strategy of maintaining peace through strength and negotiation. In the words of Elliot Richardson, Secretary of Defense in 1974, the US wanted an "era of peace...through strength, partnership and negotiation." The theme of peace was gathering national inertia. Richardson noted that "significant agreements have been reached with the Soviet Union and the nearly quarter-century of mutual isolation between the United States and the People's Republic of China has been ended." Also, the country was preparing to conclude "a just and honorable peace in Vietnam." Peace was clearly a dominant theme, perhaps our overriding national goal; on the first page of Richardson's executive summary in his Defense Posture Statement to Congress, the word "peace" appears six times.[1]

The country was ready for such a goal. As Richardson said, the nation was recovering from its "direct military engagement in Southeast Asia," and was worried that "the military power of the Soviet Union and China continues to grow." The question was, how could we maintain what Richardson called the fragile peace in Vietnam and Laos, the improved diplomatic relations with China, and the Strategic Arms Limitation agreements with the Soviet Union?[2]

The answer, which Richardson quoted from Nixon's foreign policy speech to Congress in 1973, was that the peace would come

from "strength, partnership and negotiation." If peace was the objective, partnership and negotiation were the "ways" and strength the "means." Partnership meant both our relationship with our allies (for example, in NATO) and "the new approach to our adversaries [the Soviet Union and China]."[3] But "partnership" is only an approach, a relationship; the operative word here is "negotiation." We learned from our Vietnam experience. Those "direct military engagements" did not achieve our national objectives in Vietnam and the cost in lives and dollars was high; as a result, the national approach to achieving our goals shifted from a direct to a more oblique approach, from fighting to negotiating.

All of which brings us to the "means" with which to carry out this policy of achieving peace through negotiation. As Richardson defined them, the following "means" were "the essential [elements]...to the quest for world peace": "a sufficient nuclear deterrent and balanced general purpose forces...should nuclear deterrence fail."[4]

Our strength -- nuclear and conventional forces -- was therefore the means to negotiate our way into Nixon's "era of peace." In Richardson's words, our strength allowed the President to "approach peace and mutual arms limitation from a position of strength."[5] This quotation highlights an important distinction in the function of our forces. Our military strength had two functions: one, as a deterrent (to keep the peace); and two, as an element to be negotiated (to mutually reduce forces

with our potential adversaries, and thereby increase the prospects for peace). Soldiers are trained to fulfill the former mission; the better they are trained, the better prepared they are to deter an attack.

But the role as an element of negotiation carries with it a notion which works against a trained and ready force. The value of our conventional forces depended, at least in part, on their worth at the negotiation table. Negotiation value may not be dependent on the readiness of a unit. For example, the high state of a unit's readiness may not enter the discussion if the issue were about numbers of tanks and artillery pieces in NATO. Squad and crew strength, as well as a trained force, are irrelevant in negotiations centered on numbers of weapons. By its nature, then, negotiation of this sort can devalue the quality of the force. Secretary of Defense Laird admitted to Congress in 1973 that "manpower shortages and personnel turnover have caused readiness problems in Europe" but the shortages persisted.[6] Perhaps one reason was that the strategic motivation to pay for a high state of readiness was not there if negotiation was the primary strategic method.

The military strategy in NATO mirrored this trend of down-playing the role of conventional forces (more often termed "general purpose forces" by the Defense Secretaries). Forces were first and foremost an element of negotiation in support of our national strategy. Mutual Balanced Force Reductions talks had begun in Europe with the Warsaw Pact nations in 1973.[7] As

Richardson said, general purpose forces in Europe "provide the strength upon which successful negotiations can be pursued."[8] Pursuant to the national goal of peace through negotiation, Richardson said that the objective in Europe was "a more stable military balance at lower levels of forces."[9] Secretary of Defense Schlesinger reinforced this notion a year later when he testified to Congress that "the principle focus of our general purpose force planning is on the achievement of a stable conventional force balance in Europe."[10] Again, numbers (of brigades and weapons) were the issue, and negotiation the method.

Schlesinger further deflated the value of ground forces by taking a weak stand on their priority in the budget. In his testimony to Congress, Schlesinger said that "Depending on costs, we should have the option [of] ... a non-nuclear campaign [in Europe]."[11] If general purpose forces in Europe were important, telling Congress what we "should" do "depending on costs" is not a strong argument for funds. Not surprisingly, Congress did not authorize funds to raise troop strength in Europe. The Department of Defense response was to move some brigades from stateside divisions to West Germany to bolster the number of NATO forces arrayed against the overwhelming superiority of Warsaw Pact forces.[12]

This Defense Department decision was commensurate with a strategy of negotiation because bringing extra brigades to Europe brought extra brigades to the negotiation table. On the other hand, keeping each army unit in Europe at full strength was of

little negotiation value. Perhaps that was the reason my Europe-based army unit remained at 80% strength or less from 1974-1977.

Ultimately, we found ourselves struggling to do a mission without the requisite resources in two senses -- the undermanned units in Europe and the units which should have been there to level the playing field in the first place. The fact was that the Warsaw Pact outnumbered NATO forces four to one in tanks and eight to one in artillery; not surprisingly, prominent military scholars believed that a conventional defense of West Germany by NATO would be futile.[13] The leaders I knew in Europe all understood the gap in conventional strength was there and that the nuclear forces would fill it. Our command post exercises always ended when we conducted a sort of battle hand-over to nuclear strikes after a short violent defense ending at the Rhine River.

The national security strategy denigrated ground forces in another way. While the strategy depended on both nuclear and conventional deterrence, the nuclear forces were clearly the priority. In every posture statement to Congress from 1972 to 1976, nuclear forces were the first element of military force to be discussed. General purpose forces were given second mention and about one-third the printed space of the nuclear options.

Further, the general purpose force was usually discussed not as an element in its own right, but as an element in relation to nuclear forces. For example, Richardson said that "the ground forces are important because we live in an age of nuclear

parity".[14] Schlesinger called ground forces "an indispensable ingredient of any non-nuclear deterrent."[15] Admiral Moorer, Chairman of the Joint chiefs of Staff in 1973, told Congress that "general purpose forces are the principle means of deterring attacks at levels less than nuclear warfare."[16]

The strategy backed up this nuclear priority with a significant share of the budget. Strategic weapons costs consumed over twenty per cent of the entire 1975 Department of Defense budget, and those costs did not include theater nuclear weapons.[17]

Spending money to buy robust, ready ground forces was not necessary because ground forces in Europe were more important for what they represented than what they could do. Strategists cast our forces in Europe in terms of what they represented to our allies and to our strategy of flexible response. Richardson called our ground forces in Europe "symbolically important, proof of American interest and commitment."[18] By their presence ground forces assured members of NATO that we would honor the NATO charter.

Also, ground forces provided the President "the option of an initial conventional defense [in Europe],"[19] the word "initial" implying that said defense could be followed by the big guns of theater and strategic nuclear weapons. In this sense, general purpose forces were merely a rung on the ladder of flexible response, and the bottom rung at that. It would be an unpopular, frustrating role for any army. In the military

vernacular, every soldier in Europe was at the forward observation post, ready to expend all ammunition and then call for nuclear support to do the mission the soldiers could not.

The symbolic nature of our army in Europe was clearly important to the National Security Strategy's objective of peace through strength and negotiation. Theater and strategic nuclear weapons constituted the real strength, the real muscle of the strategy. The general purpose ground forces were primarily elements of negotiation, secondary in value to nuclear forces, and the symbolic stepping stone to nuclear conflict. Given their status, one can imagine why soldiers in Europe had some trouble with their role in the defense of Europe (or even took their role seriously) and why units were consistently short of the manpower they needed.

All in all, it was an unhealthy strategy from a soldier's perspective. The soldier's purpose as an instrument of negotiation, as a tripwire for the nuclear trigger had too much value, overshadowing the soldier's ability to do the thing for which he was trained: fight and win our nation's wars. As a result, soldiers found it difficult to take pride in their profession. They were an insignificant element in a strategy which assumed their expendablilty. Often, soldiers felt betrayed by the country they served.

Worse was the strategy's second-order effects. As we have discussed, the negotiation value of units paved the way for them to be undermanned; undermanned units struggled to conduct daily

operations; not having the requisite resources frustrated leaders, caused long work days and low morale. Good soldiers knew better than to re-enlist, so mediocre ones filled out the re-enlistment quotas. It was this environment that intensified the drug abuse and racial strife which defined army life and further wounded our readiness. The strategy unwittingly aided forces of social disintegration within the ranks.

National Security Strategy, 1985

Our national security strategy did not change much throughout the remainder of the 1970s. We began the decade with the strategy of maintaining "peace through strength and negotiation," using nuclear forces as our principle means of deterrence and using our general purpose forces primarily as means of negotiation, and a trip wire connected to the nuclear trigger. The strategy focused on maintaining a balance of power between East and West, with negotiations as the tool for gradual disarmament. The readiness of our conventional forces continued to be a secondary concern, largely ignored in a negotiation process centered on a general sense of equity. This was the strategy echoed by Defense Secretary Brown in his fiscal year 1979 report to Congress:

> The main objective of our collective security system must be the maintenance of an overall military balance with the Soviet Union *no less favorable than* the one that now exists. Deterrence and stability, *not overbearing military power*, are what we seek (italics mine).[20]

Further, Brown stated that this balance should be based on "the forces necessary to deter the Soviets." Specifically, he defined our force potential as something less than the threat we faced: "We do not seek to create a mirror image of the Soviet military capabilities."[21] What it took to deter the Soviets was ill-defined, but it was clearly something less than the Soviets had. Ironically, in this strategy based on negotiated arms reductions, the US sent its negotiators to the table at a

disadvantage, and with declining assets each year. The stage was set for continued erosion of our conventional readiness and the perpetuation of a hollow army. Accordingly, spending on conventional forces continued to decline from 1975-1980 and units remained at low manning levels.[22]

Morale remained low as well, and the face of the force did not change. In 1978, I received orders to transfer from Germany to Hawaii. After joining my new unit I remember thinking that, except for the weather and the name tags, not much had changed. I also remember sharing that observation with my new division commander in a welcoming interview. He was not impressed.

The Carter administration attempted to change course at the decade's end. In his FY 1981 report to Congress, Brown admitted that "the Carter administration has concluded that the defense program must be substantially increased over the next five years, and ... we must begin that effort now."[23] Brown added that "our most pressing need [was] improving our early conventional combat capability in NATO,"[24] in order to meet the looming Soviet conventional threat. Brown further cited the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the Iran crisis as reasons for increased concerns about force readiness, but those of us in units with low morale and out-dated equipment knew that what our forces needed was a mission we could be proud of and the resources necessary to do it. In short, we needed a national security strategy that gave the conventional force an appropriate role and that provided those forces the resources to do it well.

Enter President Reagan: "We know only too well that war comes not when the forces of freedom are strong, but when they are weak. It is then that tyrants are tempted."[25] Not everyone agreed with Reagan's national security strategy, but few failed to grasp his single objective: a strong national defense. In the words of Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger, "We must correct the major weaknesses in our defenses that have resulted in a decade of neglect."[26]

What were the tenets of the National Security Strategy that drove the Reagan military build-up? An examination of its ends, ways, and means are in order. Much like Presidents Nixon, Ford and Carter, Reagan's overarching objective was "to preserve the peace."[27] The difference manifested itself in the definition of the strategy's end, its objective, and in the strategy's definition of success.

First, consider the definition of the objective: "peace." Nixon, Ford and Carter defined peace as a condition of maintaining the status quo, an environment defined by its equilibrium. Correspondingly, Secretaries' Richardson, Schlesinger, and Brown emphasized a "balance of forces" as the condition that defined "peace." However, Weinberger's plan focused on constructing "a defense that *would substantially reduce* the dangers we ... face, and, at the same time, give us the *margin of safety* necessary to preserve the peace (italics mine)."[28] Reagan sought to depart from the status quo, to *substantially reduce* the threats to our security.

Secondly, consider the objective's measure of success. Instead of a peace based on a balance of forces, a world of deterrence where both East and West were on level ground, Reagan wanted to tip the scales in our favor, giving us a *margin of safety*. It was a phrase repeated often in the posture statements of 1982-1986, in discussing both conventional and nuclear capabilities.[29] Reagan did not want equity, he wanted the upper hand. The previous strategy was a cautious, calculated approach; Reagan's approach was aggressive, bold.

It was an objective and a measure of success more suited for the character of any army. The profession of arms is rooted in the notion of besting your opponents. For the soldier, the goal is a victory, not a stalemate. As a result, the strategy's objective in and of itself fostered a positive attitude within the units to which I was assigned. In 1981, suddenly we all knew we were progressing as a force, taking charge, no longer waiting for something to happen to us. Since our defensive strategy did not essentially change -- the US strategy remained defensive in nature -- it may have been an illusion of the offensive spirit, but it was an effective, contagious one. We were going to get an edge in our struggle against threats worldwide, and every soldier in my units knew it.

Pride was breaking out all over. From 1974-1980, the National Anthem was the only song I can remember singing at ceremonial and informal Army gatherings, and this in the military. In 1981, singing "God Bless America" and other

patriotic songs suddenly became vogue at military functions. To the uninformed, this boost in morale simply meant happy soldiers. To our country's senior leaders and to our adversaries, it meant an advantage: as Napoleon said about war, "Morale makes up three quarters of the game; the relative balance of manpower accounts only for the remaining quarter."[30]

The strategy's "ways" and "means" were also a departure from previous administrations. The plan called for achieving "a margin of safety to preserve the peace" in both nuclear *and* conventional forces. In Weinberger's words, "we cannot, in good conscience, increase our reliance on the threat of nuclear weapons to evade the need for restoring our conventional military strength across the board."[31] Weinberger's position gave conventional forces a more independent role in our strategy. Conventional forces were no longer subordinate to nuclear forces, nor were conventional forces principly valued as triggers for nuclear weapons.

In fact, in his 1982 posture statement Weinberger addressed conventional forces first, then nuclear ones, in order to make a point: "It is by intention that I have not treated nuclear strategy until now [in the statement]. This administration does not regard nuclear strength as a substitute for conventional strength."[32] It was a position Weinberger would reiterate in his succeeding posture statements, and stands in contrast with his predecessors in the previous decade.[33] Weinberger de-emphasized the linkage between conventional forces and nuclear ones, giving

conventional forces a role as a major player. As a result, the Army began to develop an identity commensurate with a leading role in our national defense.

Assigning conventional forces the role as a more independent element of deterrence in their own right carried with it an expectation that those forces would be ready to fight and win if called upon. The Reagan plan provided for that possibility. Weinberger said that "our military forces must be prepared to react" and that we must "increase substantially programs to improve our steady-state of readiness of our forces."[34] To what end? The answer was so that forces could "react so strongly that our counter attacks will inflict an unacceptably high cost on the enemy -- a requirement that puts a heavy burden on our readiness."[35] Again, the overriding purpose for our conventional strength was to win the fight, echoing the theme of victory, of gaining the upper hand.

But the victory would be difficult without sufficient resources to make the readiness happen. Weinberger's plan was to address shortfalls in resources in these areas:

> -- Improving the quality and number of servicemembers through aggressive recruiting, retention and compensation programs
>
> -- Enhancing mobility and sustainability to deploy the force
>
> -- Modernizing and expanding the force.[36]

The question remained, how much is enough? Or, more practically, how much do we spend? The basis for increasing defense spending was a significant element of the strategy. The

administration recognized the inadequacy of merely comparing numbers of units or tanks to the Soviet or North Korean numbers. The preoccupation with numbers and negotiations had engendered the hollow, unprepared force the Reagan administration inherited. It would take a robust force to achieve that "margin of safety" on which the strategy rested.

To determine just how robust a force, Weinberger declined to depend entirely on the mechanistic calculations of past administrations, even at the macro level. In his words, we should not "prepare to fight two wars, or one and a half wars, or some other such tally of wars" and that we should focus instead on the flexibility "to stretch our capabilities, to engage a potential opponent on several fronts, or to be able to concentrate forces quickly in a ... critical arena." The focus was on "protecting our vital interests and winning the war,"[37] Weinberger said, and, given the "fog of war," the many intangibles, it would take a strong force indeed to attain the "margin of safety" Reagan desired. It would be significantly more powerful than Secretary Brown's vision of a force which could not be "a mirror image of the Soviet military capabilities." It would be a capabilities-plus force.

The dollar cost of defense was therefore based on the abstract notion of strength-plus, of security-plus, as well as the specific measurements of the threats and contingencies the US faced worldwide. Reagan's "margin of safety" was an expensive goal. The abstract nature of the goal made it difficult to

determine how much we should spend. Of course, the corollary to that problem was that our increased defense spending had the same effect on our adversaries, who did not know how much to spend either. It can be argued that in increasing our defense spending, in attempting to achieve Reagan's "margin of safety," we buffeted the Soviets into the economic tailspin that resulted in the break-up of the Soviet Union. At a minimum, the Reagan strategy accelerated the process.

And spend we did. Between 1981 and 1986, the Reagan administration would increase defense spending by 30 per cent in constant dollars.[38] The money was spent in the areas Weinberger outlined: personnel, mobilization and sustainment, and modernization. The results were impressive. The services attracted higher quality recruits, improving the percentage of High School graduates entering the service from 68 percent in 1980 to 91 percent from 1980 to 1984. More servicemembers chose to stay in the service as well; retention rates rose from 55 percent to 70 percent in the same period.[39] Vacancies in units were filled. In the units to which I was assigned in 1981, unmanned howitzers were a common ailment; in 1987, it was unheard of. Equipment readiness ratings also improved worldwide and modernization flourished. From 1981-1986, 14 new major weapons systems were fielded in the Army alone.[40]

The point of view from the foxhole was predictable, but no less dramatic. When I departed from one light infantry division in 1981, I bequeathed on the successive commander dispirited,

drug-abusing soldiers who worked in motor pools filled with trucks pock-marked from Viet Cong bullets. In 1987, my next light infantry division was worlds apart. After a 6-year sabbatical, I rejoined the force and found a different Army. . Sharp, drug-free soldiers and professional NCOs dominated Army life. Further, this new breed of soldier thought nothing of using a laser to attack targets with pin-point accuracy, and money was available to practice with those munitions. Even the 30-year old trucks were gone.

The strategy was a powerful antidote even at the soldier level because it spoke his language. The objective: peace, with the caveat that the peace will be kept on our terms because we are committed to having the strongest force in town, was a potent elixir for a force used to the role of a conventional force underdog. The plan of winning, as opposed to maintaining the status quo, of a continued stalemate, was also a powerful force multiplier, particularly for soldiers who train with the understanding that winning means living and losing means dying. Of course, better equipment, the money to train with it, and the pay raises didn't hurt. The skeptics might say that new toys, playtime and pocket money are extravagances. It depends on one's perspective.

For example, modern equipment was essential in the eyes of a soldier. In 1980 I found myself training with my artillery battery on a island of rocky, frozen tundra, in sight of North Korean Army units. The trucks which towed our howitzers were

twenty years old, hard to maintain, several of them still bearing the scars from the Vietnam War. On this occasion, the extreme cold weather and the age of the trucks synergized, and the trucks refused to run. We received orders to move and train in another position, but could not comply. My soldiers worked frantically to fix the broken trucks, more because of wanting the capability to depart hastily in a southern direction than because they wanted to continue training. They had little faith in their equipment, and not much more in the leaders who gave it to them. Equipment does indeed make a difference.

As does the time to train, which costs as well. Practice prevents mistakes, and mistakes can cost lives. Neither was the pay insignificant. With decent pay comes dignity. For the soldiers in my command in 1980 on food stamps to feed their family, the pay raise was not a luxury by any means.

But what does all this mean to the strategist? What lessons can one derive? First, strategic goals affect the character of the force. Defining peace as a condition wherein our forces had the upper hand helped to change the face of the Army for the better. Secondly, the role forces play is significant. Giving the Army a significant role, one not so dependent on nuclear forces, also gave the Army soldier a source of identity and pride. Further, assigning an appropriate role to forces helps soldiers realize their full potential. As the decade of the seventies ended, soldiers shed the role of a being a tripwire for a nuclear trigger, of a commodity to be negotiated, and assumed

the role of the offensive warrior, playing the part for which they were trained. It was a role they played to near perfection in the Gulf War.

Thirdly, the strategy's means were commensurate with its ways and objectives. At the national level, insufficient or misused funds would have bankrupted the strategy; the plan would have merely been tough talk. At the soldier level, a funding deficit would have the same effect, crippling morale and depleting the ranks. On the other hand, matching the talk with the resources gave soldiers a renewed faith in their country and their cause.

But perhaps the most effective part of the strategy was the abstract goal of obtaining a "margin of safety" to preserve the peace, the decision that we were not going to settle for a tense equilibrium. It meant that we had to be better than anyone else, and it gave us all something to reach for, to be better than we ever were before. Soldiers feed upon precisely those sort of ideals, and see their profession as a more worthy calling because of it. It is perhaps trite, but ideals give soldiers the self-actualization they crave, a reason to endure the physical discomfort and family separations and the thousand other pejorative attributes peculiar to military life. Suffice it to say that the Reagan strategy had the prescription about right, from the soldier's point of view. It was the tonic we needed after the "decade of neglect."

National Security Strategy, 1995

The decade of the nineties brought with it volatility, uncertainty, change and ambiguity. Into this new world we brought our old national security strategy and knew it must change. We no longer faced the Soviet Union as our adversary. For 45 years we had largely defined our strategy and our force structure based on Soviet power. Now that we had won the peace, what strategy could we formulate to keep it? Let us examine the ends, ways, and means of our current strategy.

Just as in the US strategy of the 1970s and the 1980s, the current overarching strategic goal is to preserve the peace. In President Clinton's words, his foremost mission is in "protecting our nation's security -- our people, our territory, and our way of life."[41] To achieve that goal, Clinton proposed these ends:

-- To sustain our security with military forces that are ready to fight

-- To bolster America's economic revitalization

-- To promote democracy abroad[42]

Recognizing the end of the Cold War for what it was -- an opportunity for the US to redefine the world in a way favorable for us, Clinton chose to set goals which not only maintain but enlarge the US stature as the world's sole superpower. It was, in a sense, an objective not unlike Reagan's goal to achieve the upper hand in the 1980s. Both strategies were bold, seeking to increase our national security as opposed to merely maintaining it. What was different in the Clinton strategy was that the

goals were more holistic than before, more tied to matters other than those having to do with military might. The majority of Clinton's effort -- two of his three goals -- now focused on progress in the economic and political arenas.

Further, it was only in these non-military frontiers that the true progress was to be made. Note the verbs in the goals above: while we would merely "sustain" our military might, we would "bolster" our economy and "promote" democracy. Clinton accepted the status quo in military power; the focus was on increasing gains in the economic and political arenas.

Not that our military might relative to other nations would be unaffected by the general progress in the other areas. The strategy depends upon the interrelationship between the three arenas. Clinton called these goals "mutually supportive," reasoning that "secure nations [will]... support free trade and democratic structures, that economically prosperous nations "will feel more secure" and that "democratic states will be less likely to threaten our interests."[43] In other words, maintaining our military strength will be sufficient because gains in the other arenas will reduce the need for employment of that strength.

This is indeed a major shift in our national security strategy. Throughout the Cold War we sought to deter our foes by working primarily within the military arena. Whatever the method, from arms control to arms race, our primary means of deterrence has had military roots. In effect, Clinton has cast deterrence in a different light. The focus of the

administration's effort would be to influence would-be adversaries by cultivating economic and political ground, allowing the military fields to stagnate. Consequently, the military arm has assumed a secondary, supporting role in our national strategy.

In many ways, the Clinton approach makes sense. The dawn of the post-Cold War era left the US military as the most powerful force in the world. No longer faced with the threat of Soviet expansion, further growth of our military power seems extravagant. Of course, one could argue that the same is true for the economic and political arenas -- as the world's richest and most influential nation, we could well rest on our laurels in these areas as well. But Clinton argues that the US can "not walk away from the challenge of the moment" today any more than we did after WWII. Instead, we must "secure the peace won in the Cold War" through consolidation of the economic and political ground.[44]

The question at the national level is how best to secure that peace; the issue at stake at the soldier's level is the military's mission. To a soldier, "sustain[ing] our security" with the military sounds very similar to the strategic objective in the 1970s, "achieving a balance of forces." It was a different world then, but the effect on a soldier is the same. Sustainment implies maintaining the status quo, and does not imply progress. Instead, it implies stagnation, and stagnation allows your adversary to gain the upper hand. While a soldier

stands fast, sustaining his force, other soldiers in other nations may not. In this regard, "sustaining our security" is oxymoronic -- a soldier's definition of security requires improvement relative to adversaries, consolidation of gains, achievement of what Weinberger called a "margin of safety." It is progress, not sustainment, that leads to dependable, current equipment, better training and more lives saved on the battlefield. Therefore, after an understanding of Clinton's objectives, a soldier will likely be skeptical, cautious of what follows.

A soldier might take solace in the objective's second message, that the US will "sustain [her] security with military forces that are ready to fight."[45] However, history teaches us that readiness can be an empty promise, and a vague one. At what some consider the nadir of our Army's readiness, Secretary Brown contended that "readiness remains our top priority." Secretary Schlesinger made a similar promise, with no better results. And how does one define "readiness?" In Secretary Richardson's view, readiness meant the capability to employ strategic weapons. Weinberger defined it as high quality servicemen, sufficient mobility and sustainment support, modern equipment, and most essential, the funds to make it happen. The point is that until one gets to the means of a strategy, where the money is being spent, "readiness" is just talk.

But before we discuss the strategy's resources, we should examine the "ways," or methods of the strategy. Lashed tightly

to the objectives, the method of "engagement and enlargement" is dedicated to expanding the economic and political world stature of the US, and to the employment of forces to those ends. Let us begin by defining engagement and enlargement.

Engagement refers primarily to "engagement abroad."[46] On several occasions the Clinton strategy warns against the adopting of an isolationist philosophy.[47] The instruments of engagement are political, military and economic, and engagements are tied to these national interests: "our physical defense, [our] economic well-being, [our] environmental security and the security of values ... of ... democratic nations." Those values include "our efforts to guarantee basic human rights on a global basis."[48] Suffice it to say that the strategy sets the stage for the use of military assets in virtually any role. Yet the strategy's plan addresses our limited resources: "our engagement must be selective, focusing on the challenges that are most relevant to our own interests and focusing our resources where we can make the most difference."[49]

If engagement means confronting the challenges to our interests, establishing an appropriately influential foothold, then enlargement means exploiting our advantage, or expanding our influence where we are already engaged. It is "enlarging the community of democratic and free market nations" as well as "enhancing American competitiveness ... [and] access to foreign markets."[50] It is "working with new democratic states to help preserve them as democracies committed to free markets and

respect for human rights." Again, in recognition of our finite resources, the strategy of enlargement seeks to "help democracy and markets expand and survive...where we have the strongest security concerns and can make the greatest difference."[51] It is, in short, an attempt to Americanize as much of the world as we can.

The military's role in this plan is varied. The strategy lists these tasks: military forces must deter and defeat aggressors, counter Weapons of Mass Destruction, contribute to peace operations, provide humanitarian relief, and support counterterrorism efforts. Also, the military must train and exchange forces with emerging democratic nations, enhance American competitiveness by sharing technologies, and assist in the fight to control drug trafficking.[52]

At the soldier level, the problem is that there is a limit to the number of roles he can play -- well. It is, and always has been, a full-time job to hone warfighting skills. Any other missions one assigns a soldier detract from his ability to fight, survive, and win a war. As a member of a division preparing to deploy to Bosnia, I witnessed my soldiers' warfighting skills atrophy as we focused our training on peacekeeping operations. Soldiers who were trained to close with and destroy an enemy had to learn how to employ different weapons: the art of negotiation, of compromise, patient responses to stimuli. He had to suppress the learned instincts of survival, of self-defense, of rapid, deadly use of his weapons. This transformation of an

entire division of soldiers does not happen overnight; after a year of concentrated training the character of the force began to change. After two years of training, soldiers began to speak and live the peacekeepers' language. By the spring of 1995, we were ready to go to Bosnia, and the unit has done well there thus far.

But the cost incurred was in our conventional warfighting account, where we were expected to stay proficient. At the national level, the Clinton strategy states that "the primary mission of our Armed Forces is not peace operations; it is to deter, and if necessary, to fight and win our nation's wars."[53] Naturally, our division leadership did not ignore the President's guidance, and so we trained for both war and peace operations. The result was that our performance as a unit in high intensity operations diminished significantly. Performance in combat exercises at USAREUR's training center was progressively weaker as units improved in peacekeeping operations. I learned that a unit cannot prepare for both war and peace and be truly ready to execute both.

There was also a not insignificant human cost. The incompatibility of resources and missions wounded our morale. We worked longer hours but did not see results, because, as my Sergeant Major was wont to say, "We just cain't get there from here." Mission overload is a frustrating experience for a soldier, who by his very nature wants to prepare, be ready for the next mission. What is the priority? According to the Clinton strategy, it is "to fight and win conflicts"; according

to the Presidential order to deploy to Bosnia (and Haiti), the answer is, "it depends." This is not to say that our forces should not be flexible enough to accomplish a variety of tasks in this very complex post-Cold War world, only that when you ask a soldier to do two operations, the doing of one being in conflict if not opposition with the other, you are likely to spawn confusion and rancor in the ranks.

This problem compounds itself as one considers the varied roles Clinton's strategy expects of the military. If readiness is indeed the administration's top priority, then it needs to recognize the drain peripheral missions will have on its resources -- particularly the soldiers who must fight and win the nation's conflicts. From a soldier's perspective, there are two solutions, and both are dependent upon resources. His preferred solution is to remain primarily focused on warfighting skills, leaving as many of the peripheral missions to other agencies. Of course, soldiers can and will perform any variety of missions, so a second solution would be to allow a soldier to focus on one mission at a time, allocating other resources to shore up the conventional holes soldiers leave when they become something else.

This leads us to the means of the Clinton strategy. The military means of this strategy are clearly not commensurate with its ends and ways. The first problem is in how the force structure is derived. Based on the Bottom-Up Review (BUR) of Defense Secretary Aspin's tenure, the forces must have "the

ability, in concert with our allies, to win two nearly simultaneous regional conflicts."[54] Hearkening back to the bean-counting strategy of the 1970s, Clinton is basing our security requirements on the number of tanks two of our potential adversaries have -- today. The strategy does not take into account what they might have tomorrow, and thus the Clinton goal of "sustainment of our security" may haunt us tomorrow. Further, as Secretary Weinberger pointed out, building a force based entirely on a specific number of wars or fronts or tanks limits the nation's flexibility when dealing with an adversary.[55] True, it was a different world then, but do we need any less flexibility today? Ironically, Clinton is trying to secure the peace in a volatile, changing environment with a precision system based on numbers.

Even within its own parameters the BUR is flawed. It is dependent on future force structure: "*With programmed enhancements*, the forces the administration is fielding will be sufficient to help defeat aggression on two nearly simultaneous major regional conflicts (italics mine)."[56] The strategy is dependent upon means not yet available, a risky imbalance between ends and means. The risk is amplified when one considers that the BUR built a force to fulfill only one role in a strategy that calls for a multitude of roles for the military.

From a soldier's perspective, limiting the force structure to the capability to fulfill only one of its assigned roles exacerbates the problem of balancing missions. As more soldiers

deploy to Bosnia, to Haiti, to other lands, they absolutely must not let their warfighting skills atrophy because there is no "margin of safety" in the force the BUR built. Yet those skills do atrophy, and, after a long peacekeeping deployment, the soldier returns to intense training at a frantic pace to re-learn what he once mastered in the art of war. Most soldiers have families, and the pain of enduring a long separation is aggravated when intense field training mars the homecoming. Good soldiers recognize good, caring leadership, and the Army will lose good soldiers if they are treated poorly. And, should the nation have to call upon these soldiers before they are ready, they may launch into the fray unprepared. The force of the future may not be hollow in the ranks, but it will be hollow in its focus, and the effect will be the same: low morale and a hemorrhage of top-quality individuals who depart the service for a vocation with a clearer vision.

Finally, there is the question of money. The strategy calls for a force capable of doing multiple missions and be ready to fight if called upon. Readiness is purportedly the top priority. Yet, in 1994, my division cancelled major training exercises and could not get spare parts to keep combat vehicles running. Money to fix broken plumbing in the barracks was not available. The last time that sort of thing happened was during the lean-budget, hollow-Army years of the 1970s. Veteran soldiers remember those years, and the incongruence between our leaders' expectations and what we could do well. It is not a favorable association for the

current administration. Soldiers are better, smarter now than they were in the 1970s, and can recognize the difference between tough talk and action to back it up. If that perception persists, the already looming crisis of confidence soldiers have with their national leadership will only become more divisive.

Conclusions

The question is, from the soldier's perspective, what can we offer strategic thinkers to assist in the formulation of future policy? The simple answer is to consider the effect of strategy on the soldiers who must comply with it. While there is no recipe one can follow to avoid the pitfalls of the past, one may be able to form some guiding principles to consider in strategy formulation based on the preceding discussion.

First, the strategist must understand the nature, the character of the Army soldier. If the strategy calls for a soldier do a task or assume a role which is out of character for a warfighter, then the strategy will likely have a pejorative effect on the force. Consider this element of soldiership: The desire to be the best. The rites of competition begin in a soldier's basic training and follow him throughout his tenure in the service. It is second nature for a soldier to compete within his unit, between units, or against a standard. The objective is to best opponents, a worthy attribute for obvious reasons. It is also an attribute which the strategy of the 1970s undermined. The mission to stall the Soviet advance while nuclear options were considered was an anathema to a soldier, as was the subordinate role he played to the strategy's ultimate victor, the nuclear arsenal. The strategy's principle tenet, maintaining a balance of forces, also violates this element of a soldier's character; a tie is a lost battle. That is why the Reagan

strategy's focus on winning, on gaining the upper hand was so eagerly internalized by soldiers starved for a chance to compete with opponents.

A related attribute ingrained in the profession of arms is a soldier's never-ending concern with security, the protection of the force. The tactical application of security involves a spacial distance between a soldier and his opponent, as well as an advantage in capability over that opponent. The fear of the successful attack by a superior force drives a soldier to constantly improve his position, his defenses, his firepower. The "balance of forces" strategy bankrupts this character element, as does the Clinton strategy of "sustaining [the US] security." Both strategies call for maintenance of the status quo, acceptance of the current condition. Only by continuous, vigilant progress can a soldier be assured of being prepared to fight, survive and win against an opponent. Soldiers search for the "margin of safety" Weinberger provided, so it is no surprise that this element of the Reagan strategy was eagerly adopted by the force.

Another distinctive element of a soldier's identity is his loyalty to his country and to its leadership. A soldier's respect for authority is a cliche; patriotism is his way of life. Because of his willing submission to authority and his deep love for his country he will do what it takes to get his missions accomplished. If the resources are insufficient, he will make do. This "can-do" attitude may appear sophomoric, even necessary

to the strategist at the national level but its consequences can be grave. If there is a shortfall between a strategy's ends and its means, a soldier's natural inclination is to work harder, to improvise, to attempt to solve with leadership or industry what should be solved with material.

Case in point: the Clinton strategy states that warfighting is the Army's primary purpose, yet the resources are insufficient. In USAREUR, warfighting readiness was wounded by peacekeeping missions, and the USAREUR funding in 1994 fell short of needs. As a result, units tried to do both missions with less resources; the leadership was frustrated, morale was low and reenlistments plummeted. Sadly, older soldiers were familiar with the environment. In 1975, when our hollow force was expected to halt Soviet advance in Germany but was capable of merely gumming up their tank treads, similar frustration abounded. One cannot calculate with accuracy the damage such turmoil does to a force, its readiness, its soldiers. We only know from our experience in the seventies that the damage takes a great deal of time and effort to fix.

Another principle strategists should consider is the second-order effects a strategy might have on soldiers. For example, consider the Nixon strategy of peace through negotiation. Units were valued as entities, which gave Congress no reason to fund fully-manned units. Tanks were on the negotiation table, not the size of the crews manning them. The lack of funding led to the forming of hollow squads, platoons and companies. The training

did not decrease because the Soviet threat did not, and the maintenance was still a challenge -- a self-propelled howitzer still needed to be maintained even if the crew was short a few men. With less people to do the same amount of work, the result was longer hours, low morale and frustrated leaders. It was this environment that intensified drug abuse and racial strife. The human dimension of warfighting is hard to measure but may be predictable.

A similar phenomenon may be at work today. The Clinton strategy calls for a military to "sustain our security." As we have discussed, "sustainment" at the soldier level means a lack of progress. To Congress it may mean a lack of funds. Measuring the funds necessary for readiness is difficult enough, but a "sustained" capability is likely all the more ripe for underfunding. The potential for a capabilities gap is exacerbated by the dollar- and capabilities-cost of non-warfighting missions. As in the 1970s, morale, re-enlistment and the quality of the force may be casualties. The damage may not be immediate; it may be a decade before our capabilities are hollow in the face of emerging threats. But even if we have the time and the money to rebuild the force a la Reagan, the threats to our security may not operate on the same schedule.

None of this is to say that second-order effects on soldiers or the intrinsicalities of soldiers should necessarily change our strategic direction. Soldiers sign up to serve the nation in any milieu. But all strategists clearly should weigh the negative

effects of a strategy against the positive ones before making a decision. If the national gain justifies the cost, so be it. But a strategist who does not consider (and perhaps alter) the plan based on its effects on soldiers is not seeing the complete strategic picture and may overlook a strategic long-term effect. The danger is in forgoing the assessment.

ENDNOTES

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